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A Word from the President

Dear Members, dear Colleagues, dear Friends,

We are now on the eve of our annual EU Foreign Affairs Spouses Association (EUFASA) conference being held in the country of the EU Presidency – Latvia. The need has never been greater to emphasize the role of spouses in our Ministries of Foreign Affairs – and the EEAS for that matter. Naturally each of our 23 country members of EUFASA has different stories to tell which we will hear in Riga. We aim to see what fellow members have achieved and the best practice that we might try to emulate in our own environments. The EEAS policies towards spouses are not as developed as in many of our members. EUFN will be presenting the results of its survey of national associations' achievements and where more work needs to be done. The High Representative herself opened the last EUFASA conference in Rome when she was Italy's Foreign Minister. We now need her commitment to our cause.

Spouses' Role in a Modern Diplomacy Context -

A contribution to fostering internal Corporate and Social Responsibility (CSR) and EU Public Diplomacy

This article was specially commissioned by the EUFN to highlight the role of spouses in modern diplomacy. We are very grateful that Dr. Ursula Vavrik, Mexico City, agreed to author it.

Abstract: Changing contexts imply the need to rethink institutional support for families, and in particular the role of a diplomat's spouse, and to adapt related policies accordingly as does the private sector. Furthermore, it is suggested the EEAS should foster dual careers more comprehensively in order to stay competitive in the future. In consequence, there is a need for more institutional guidance and integration, along with an acceptance of the spouse as "added value" and "additional asset for the system" in a modern diplomacy context, particularly in respect of enhancing the European Diplomatic Service and the European Public and Cultural Diplomacy.

Having been accompanying spouse of a diplomat for almost 30 years now, I have been asked to write about the spouses' role in delegations and I am glad to share my experiences and visions with you, both from a national and an EU diplomatic perspective.

An ever-changing context

While Europe and the European framework have been continuously changing over the last decades, also technology, economic, societal and family patterns are changing and last but not least the way diplomacy is carried out. All those developments have a significant impact on diplomats and the role (and career) of their spouses. Let me touch upon some examples.

Whereas in ancient times, diplomatic messages have been transmitted by horse-drawn carriages and "Ministers", more recently technology allowed transmission via encrypted mail, and today Heads of States and Ambassadors are "tweeting" important messages to the whole world, be it the most recent results of the EU Council or images of the cheering crowd at an EU national day in a delegation abroad.

New public and cultural diplomacy concepts are reorienting diplomacy in a completely new direction as the examples of the UK (Great Britain is Great) and Switzerland (Präsenz Schweiz) are demonstrating. In this particular aspect, we see a huge window of opportunity for the role and enhanced integration of the diplomat's spouses.With ***European integration***, European countries have moved closer together and 28 countries are building a common political and economic area, in which diplomacy has changed as well.

Spouses' role in Delegations

Spouses' role in Delegations

The roles of Ambassadors of European countries in another European country probably have slightly lost their importance, since communication is more often happening directly in Brussels between Ministers. In the same vein, the role of diplomatic spouses became different; diplomatic immunity as stated in the Vienna Diplomatic Convention (see (1) EUFN Newsflash of November 2014) does not play the same role any longer in a European context for spouses and dual careers therefore become slightly more achievable there than before. ***The Netherlands*** for example explicitly allow all spouses coming from an EU member state or being married to an EU citizen to work while granting them diplomatic status and ***have MoUs with 40 third countries facilitating work for diplomat's spouses***. (2)

On the international scene, European diplomacy is different in the context of the new common foreign and security policy, ***competences of the European diplomats are growing*** and have been upgraded. For the first time in history, EU diplomats represent all the 28 Member States, at least in those areas in which a common EU position exists. Traditional spouses' roles, being "just a trailing spouse", are slightly fading away, since younger generations want to (and have to!) pursue personal professional careers. However, immunity and insurance issues unfortunately still play a major constraint for spouses' professional careers, and bilateral and multilateral agreements between states facilitating careers of diplomatic spouses are still scarce. Professional activity for spouses is therefore very often only possible on an unpaid basis.

On the other hand, the international economic and financial crisis led to budget cuts and revised pension schemes, also in many European countries, and "households with two salaries" have become ever more a necessity for the middle class. The particular challenge for diplomatic systems consists therefore in ***facilitating dual careers, also in third countries.***

The legal status and the official role of a diplomat's spouse – representation and beyond (3)

What exactly is the role of a diplomat's spouse in delegations? More the "*traditional*" one: accompanying the diplomat and representing with him? Or just trying to pursue a personal career and managing the family? Or the "*modern*" version, a mixture of both roles?

While in national diplomatic services, the official role (rights and duties) of the spouse can be either derived from common practice or is sometimes quite well defined in official documents like internal handbooks or even by law. ***In Austria*** where ***diplomats have an own statute*** with references to spouses and family members, it is for instance explicitly mentioned that "***the HoD should support spouses in search of an adequate working opportunity***". (4)

The EEAS does not seem to have such a supportive official statement on the role and career facilitation of the spouses yet. The current version of the "Delegation guide" is limited to defensive administrative references what spouses may or may not do and it is mentioned that in most countries spouses will lose their immunity if they work. In fact, a more supportive wording would be most welcome, also with respect to the possibility that some countries such as Mexico allow professional activities from diplomats' spouses of all countries. The new law of 2013 stipulates in chapter III, that ***immunity is only lost "in relation to professional activities", but not in general***.

Another issue is the attitude towards presence or representation for spouses. While in other countries (e.g. Austria), such references exist, they cannot be found in the EEAS guide. There seems to be a need for a legal and institutional setting and guidance for spouses in the EEAS, since whatever a spouse is doing and wherever she or he is present, spouses are always also representing the European Union. Currently, there is no indication that the EEAS would be either interested or supportive of an active representation of spouses.

*>> **Recommendation**: To reword the references to spouses' activities in the Delegation Guide in a more supportive way according to highest European and international standards.*

The most classical role of a diplomat's spouse is probably the representational role.

In many countries it is very common, if not welcomed or "in the interest of the diplomatic service" as one can read in the Austrian handbook for the Foreign Service, that diplomats are accompanied by their spouses. It goes without saying that it is common practice that they also represent together.
This means that, to whatever event the diplomat is invited with spouse, the spouse is not only welcomed to assist, but it is common practice or rather a kind of representational tradition the spouse has to fulfil, to accompany the diplomat.

Spouses' role in Delegations

Spouses' role in Delegations

In the same vein, lunches and dinners are hosted together and the majority of the social life, especially in the evenings, is managed as a couple. At least in national diplomatic services, this was the daily life we have lived throughout the years. Nowadays, courtesy visits with diplomatic colleagues are often already done with spouse which is a welcomed new trend, whereas in other areas such as invitations the trend is rather to neglect the spouse, Diplomats are often invited "with guest", rather than stating "Mr. X and spouse" or "Mr and Mrs. X" . Even with changing family patterns, spouses' policies and protocol issues will always remain important.

In the absence of clear guidance, the EEAS does not seem to have the same common diplomatic practices and goals as national diplomatic services, including for spouses. This also relates for instance to the way representation is done. In Austria for instance, every official gets his or her proper representation budget he or she is personally responsible for, which has to be spent throughout the year. The aim is to be able to keep contact with most important counterparts at all levels of the diplomatic service, including at consular level.

In the EEAS, representational activities and budget are more centralised at the HoD level, and a culture of regular representation at all levels is almost non-existent. This is really a completely different approach. The EEAS has only existed for a short time and the tasks and competences of Commission Officials before the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty were different. The new common foreign policy of the EU is definitely a new area in European diplomacy and thus in how to represent the EU. Diplomats in delegations coming from the various Commission services and the EEAS and their respective spouses should therefore be made aware of that and receive specific training.

*>>**Recommendations**: 1. to include references to the specific role of spouses in official documents. 2. A systematic specific obligatory diplomatic training for spouses (and maybe also for some non-diplomats coming from Brussels and having never been in a delegation) on representation, protocol, diplomatic habits, etc. should be thought of.*

If you represent a country or an organisation, you know what you represent. However, in the case of the European Union, with its changing legal backgrounds and policy contexts, this is not such an easy task. Whenever I talked with non-specialists here in Mexico City, even diplomats from third countries and especially their spouses, almost nobody would know about the recent policy changes related to the Lisbon Treaty. Most people would ask "What is the Lisbon Treaty?"

Fostering dual careers – a real challenge not only for the EEAS

As stated above, new generations of diplomat's spouses no longer can be satisfied with the accompanying or representational role alone. Most of them are highly qualified individuals, having often pursued careers at the same level as the respective diplomats. Just to give you the example from the EU delegation in Mexico: out of 12 EU diplomats eight have spouses, and all spouses have pursued a professional career before having been posted to Mexico, two of them as officials of the European Commission and two of them had already worked for several years in the European Commission or related institutions.

Fostering dual careers meanwhile has become almost common practice in the private sector, since otherwise it appears to be difficult to be able to retain highly qualified staff. Whereas the latter also is true for national diplomatic services or the EEAS, reforms are only being achieved slowly, with some exceptions such as the US and the Netherlands, the US even having MoUs or similar agreements with about 160 countries of the world facilitating gainful employment for diplomat's spouses. (6) In this respect, it has to be commended that in the 2015 EEAS rotation there were six double postings (none of them in Mexico City, alas!) A post in a delegation in which the spouse cannot work, may not only entail negative effects for the personal career of the spouse (career gaps), but also a significant financial loss for the couple. Also, there is now much less financial incentive to leave Brussels.

National diplomatic systems see themselves confronted with similar challenges. This is why at the European level, EUFASA (7) has recommended in its 2014 GA establishing a post exchange between EU and national diplomats' spouses, etc. (see also *EUFN Newsflash* July 2014). At international level, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) even defends "a decent job for all" as a "human right" in its "Decent Job Agenda" (see (8), and (9)).

More and more countries like the US, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Spain, Mexico and Austria, just to mention a few, have established bilateral agreements with other countries to facilitate professional careers for diplomats' spouses. The insurance issue still remains to be tackled in a satisfactory way.

Spouses' role in Delegations

Spouses' role in Delegations

For the time being, spouses lose the right to be insured together with their diplomats as soon as they earn above certain limits (around 6000 €/year for EEAS diplomats' spouses) which makes it almost impossible to work in many countries where local insurance schemes would not cover adequate care (in Mexico City e.g. a day in an adequate hospital will cost up to 3000 € a day, prepaid, otherwise one will not be treated).

*>> **Recommendations:** 1. In bilateral agreements or MoUs with almost all other states in which the EU is represented need to be established allowing for spouses to work without losing immunity completely (only in respect to the specific professional activity, what is already common practice in some states). 2. The insurance policy needs to be revised taking into consideration a higher limit (some 25 000€ or more rather than the existing 6000€ which makes it almost impossible to engage in gainful employment in third countries). 3. HoDs should get specific instructions to support staff and their spouses in a) housing issues, b) school etc. issues, and c)to support spouses in their search for a professional activity within the framework of their possibilities.*

A decent job for all - EUFN in defence of diplomat's spouses, CSR and other European values

The European Union and its Members States are a community of values, including values related to equality, equal opportunities, gender, etc., all enshrined in the Treaty. Furthermore, the EC has developed the EU CSR strategy 2011-2014 and backs the ISO 26000 guidelines (10). If the EU defends the highest standards at EU and multilateral level, it should also implement them internally with the same enthusiasm and rigor.

ISO 26 000 refers to respect and engagement for stakeholders and vulnerable groups. Spouses can be considered both as stakeholders and as vulnerable groups. It cannot be highlighted often enough that diplomat's spouses have to compromise on their careers to their personal and financial disadvantage, more than any other professional group ("the privileged underprivileged").

*>> **Recommendation**: To develop proactive policies to support diplomats' spouses following highest international standards related to corporate social responsibility (CSR) while at the same time respecting and implementing major European values such as equal opportunities and equality.*

Boosting the image of the European Union – Spouses as discreet assets and multipliers

Besides the human rights issue, there is another important aspect to be considered when promoting the working conditions for diplomat's spouses. As mentioned above, most of them are highly qualified and many of them have worked in EU institutions or the like. Spouses therefore could be regarded as valuable assets and multipliers to boost the image of the European Union, especially when integrated into the professional world but also in society. They have contacts with people in society diplomats normally do not have relations with, or at least less. And they can perform similar roles as diplomats: explaining and representing the European Union. In this respect, sometimes spouses could be confronted with attacks on the EU or its staff. In Europe and in Mexico City, one has heard ("You seem to be an intelligent lady, but you have an EU umbrella" or "EU diplomats are earning too much" or "EU officials do not work hard" – what a shame!) not every spouse can handle such situations in the best possible way, for instance by calming down a dispute or referring to certain literature as to Robert Menasse's, "Der Europäische Landbote" (2012, "The European Messenger"), a chorus of praise for EU officials.

*>> **Recommendation**: To provide training to spouses to enhance their role in boosting the image of the European Union.*

Spouses as potential actors in the new EU Public Diplomacy Strategy – some examples

The new EU Public Diplomacy Strategy is currently being established. Maybe thought could be given to including spouses of diplomats as important actors in this strategy. As already stated, spouses are contributing to the image of the EU, in whatever role. If they are pursuing a professional career, then their multiplier effect is even bigger. Some examples:

1. *Active in diplomatic and other associations*: As the president of the diplomatic spouses' organisation in Mexico in 2013, I took the opportunity to make a presentation on the new European Diplomatic Service at one of our meetings. This was very much welcomed, since most people were completely unaware of ongoing political and policy changes in the European Union in this respect. Furthermore, under my presidency, the organisation supported four charity projects with a total amount of about 12 000€.

2. *Active in societal conversations*: Last year, I sat next to a journalist of the official journal of the Mexican National Bank. "The EU has 18 members, isn't it, she asked?" This is just to let you know that the level of information about the EU very often is rather low, not only in third countries, even amongst European citizens. I have sent her the excellent slide show on the EU available on the net for teachers in all languages (60 slides). (11)

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3. *Active as University teacher, etc.*: Having been invited to several Universities to give classes on the European Union, I was able explain to students and conference participants the very many positive facts about the EU. Thus, I was able to influence students in an evidence-based way so that they were able to step back from a certain negative viewpoint about the EU they got from the press and enrich their horizon. I organised conferences with Ambassadors from European countries on various themes in addition to the ones organised by or with the EU delegation.

4. *Active as conference speaker.* I have been invited as conference speaker on several subjects regarding the European Union, last but not least about the EU Public and Cultural Diplomacy Strategy.

5. *Active as book author:* It was a pleasure to follow the invitation to contribute to a publication on integrating environmental policy in the US and the EU. In this respect, I successfully convinced colleagues that the EU had influenced international environmental policy much more than the US (Mexican colleagues having been heavily influenced by the US).

6. *Active as facilitator:* Also, I helped a Mexican school to get in touch with the French Embassy and the Lycée Français to be able to offer French education. Or on another occasion, I facilitated a meeting for a Managing Director of Brussels with the US Ambassador, since his spouse was my Vice-president in the diplomatic association.

7. *Active in development aid:* On a personal basis, I supported an indigenous school to offer sewing courses to foster communal self-sufficiency (having bought two sewing machines).

*>> **Recommendations**: 1.To allow more time for the pre-posting sessions for spouses to orient them towards possible activities that also may have a very positive effect in terms of EU public or cultural diplomacy. 2. Eventually, it could be of interest to include spouses in trainings for officials (at all levels, at their yearly trainings, Ambassadors' conference, deputy/political officers seminar, etc.), at least for some joint sessions (general outlook, protocol, etc.). 3. Facilitate training for spouses in delegations. 4. Explore developing a database for spouses to be better able to plan dual careers. 5. Explore establishing a network of EU University teachers on European Affairs (paid by the EEAS with Public Information budgets), primarily open to spouses, depending on their qualifications. 6. Establish regular yearly meetings between the EEAS Human Resources and the EUFN.*

References:

(1) EUFN Newsflash November 2014
(2) See the Netherlands Protocol Guide for Diplomatic Missions, 2013 http://www.government.nl/issues/staff-of-foreign-missions-and-international-organisations/documents-and-publications/leaflets/2013/01/21/protocol-guide-for-diplomatic-missions-en-consular-posts-january-2013.html
(3) For a more detailed discussion please see http://www.diplomacy.edu/resources/general/parallel-dual-careers-diplomatic-spouses , 1998 and http://www.eufasa.org/associations/conferences/13_Bern/docs/report_final/Opening%20statement%20by%20Mrs.%20Daniela%20Lauer,%20EUFASA%20Chair%202013.pdf, Mai 2013
(3) See Statute Austrian Diplomatic Service, 2104, https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10001572&ShowPrintPreview=True
(5) See http://www.dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5312385&fecha=30/08/2013
(6) See http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/133570.pdf
(7) See EUFASA Conference 2014, http://www.eufasa.org/DOCS/Rome_14/rapp.breve%20Inglese.pdf
(8) Decent Work for All: A Holistic Human Rights Approach, Gillian MacNaughton and Diane F. Frey, American University International Law Review, Vol.26, Issue 2,2011 http://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1704&context=auilr
(9) ILO Decent Work Agenda 2007, http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/CON51.pdf
(10) See http://www.iso.org/iso/home/news_index/news_archive/news.htm?refid=Ref1490
(11) See http://europa.eu/abc/euslides/index_en.htm

Biographical Note: Dr Ursula Vavrik holds a Master's degree and a PhD (1990) in Economic and Social Sciences, her doctoral thesis being awarded with the Rudolf Sallinger Prize of the Austrian Chamber of Commerce for outstanding research. She pursued an international career having worked for multinational organizations (the UN and OECD), EU institutions, academia, the private sector and NGOs. Areas of specific expertise encompass international and EU policy and politics, particularly in the fields of environment, development and sustainable development. Mrs. Vavrik is founder and Director of NEW WAYS Centre for Sustainable Development. She published in Europe and the US, is married and has two children.

AFGHANISTAN

Oser un poste difficile ...

Chacun d'entre nous, à un moment ou l'autre de sa carrière, peut se voir proposer un poste à l'étranger dans un pays dit "difficile", voire "très difficile". Placé devant une telle perspective, l'agent sage et avisé réfléchira à deux fois, et cela est bien compréhensible. A fortiori si la "destination difficile" est un "non-family posting".

Pourtant, le fait de franchir le pas et d'accepter le poste peut représenter une expérience humaine inoubliable et qui permet à chacun d'être confronté à soi-même, de remettre en cause ses certitudes, ses idées reçues et de se retrouver face à a propre personne, avec ses ressources et ses limites, ses potentialités connues et insoupçonnées et sa faculté, présumée ou avérée, de dépasser des bornes que l'on croyait infranchissables.

Ainsi en est-il de l'expérience Afghane.
Voici une tranche de vie qui peut se révéler autant enthousiasmante que frustrante.
Dès l'arrivée à l'aéroport de Kaboul, le choc est déséquilibrant. Tu viens de passer une nuit dans un avion turc bondé, entre les enfants qui pleurent et les mercenaires de tout poil qui discutent à voix haute sans considération pour ce sommeil que tu chercheras en vain et qui arrivera quelques instants avant qu'une voix métallique t'avertisse qu'il est temps de rattacher ta ceinture pour l'atterrissage…

L'avion se pose sur la piste unique partagée avec les avions militaires et ceux des Nations Unies, puis se dirige vers le terminal en longeant des carcasses d'Antonov, d'Ilioushine et de vieux coucous de compagnies blacklistées…

Dans un décor minéral, des baraques sordides écrasées de soleil, des hommes en armes (militaires, policiers, civils…), des fantômes en burqas bleues, des enfants qui grouillent, une circulation chaotique dans des voitures blindées, engoncés dans des gilets pare-balles… et commence un périple d'une demi-heure vers la délégation.

Regarde, ouvre grands tes yeux et regarde bien, européen, le voilà l'Afghanistan réel dont tu entends parler comme d'un pays en guerre depuis plus de trente années… Emplis ta mémoire de ce moment d'exception car ce sera un des rares contacts que tu auras avec la réalité locale, au travers d'une vitre à l'épreuve (du moins l'espère-t-on) des balles et explosifs qui peuvent te prendre pour cible à tout moment.

Une fois arrivé à la Délégation, les portes se referment derrière toi. Tu es sain et sauf, encore un peu grisé du tourbillon d'images et de sensation qui t'a emporté depuis ton arrivée. "Les portes du pénitencier sur toi se sont refermées" chantait Johnny voici bien longtemps.

Dorénavant, tu vivras en vase clos, avec pour voisins de logements tes voisins de bureaux. Ta navette quotidienne consistera en 218 pas entre le seuil de ton appartement et celui de ton bureau. Tu le sais, tu les as comptés si souvent…

A midi trente, tu quitteras ton bureau pour aller partager ton repas avec tes compagnons de labeur. Immanquablement, les propos de table te ramèneront à ton job. Et le soir, tu prolongeras ton travail aussi longtemps que tu le pourras, sans doute pour retarder autant que possible ta confrontation avec la solitude et le silence qui t'attendent au logis.

Ta famille et tes repères sont loin. Tu vis en vase clos. Et tu te remémores cette lecture d'adolescence, "Huis clos", de Jean-Paul Sartre.

Et c'est là que s'opère le tournant.

C'est là que vient la catharsis et que tu prends conscience que tu peux décider de faire de ta retraite forcée le début d'une nouvelle existence.

C'est là que tu te rends compte que les portes de l'esprit s'ouvrent dans les deux sens, vers l'intérieur et vers l'extérieur.

Et c'est là que tu réalises que tu as besoin d'approfondir ta connaissance du monde pour te comprendre toi-même, et ta connaissance de toi pour comprendre le monde.

Alors les murs qui se sont élevés dans ton esprit se lézardent, laissent passer la lumière et finissent pas tomber.

Tu es confronté à toi-même, tu découvres que tu ne te connais pas ou que tu ne te connais plus. Tu refais connaissance avec ta propre personne et tu fais l'inventaire de tes aspects clairs, gris ou plus sombres. Tu as le temps pour cela… Personne ne te presse.

Tu relis et redécouvres des ouvrages simples ou plus ardus.

Tu trouves des significations nouvelles aux gestes les plus anodins de la vie quotidienne.

Et petit à petit, tu t'aperçois que tu ne savais plus rien de toi, que tu t'étais abandonné et qu'il t'appartient, si tu le veux, de te rebâtir.

Et c'est là que tu apprécies ta chance et que tu attribues sa juste valeur à cette possibilité qui t'est donnée.

Le lendemain matin, en découvrant les actualités, tu donnes une signification différente à l'énumération des malheurs du temps. Les nombres de victimes d'attentats et de conflits cessent d'être d'arides statistiques et deviennent pour toi autant d'opportunités perdues. Tu comprends que c'est Mozart qu'on assassine. Que ces morts sont bien réelles : tu les as entendues dans les explosions de la nuit. Cela n'est plus à des milliers de kilomètres de toi, c'est là, juste derrière ce rempart hérissé de barbelés et défendus par des gardes armés jusqu'aux dents.

Puis vient l'heure du congé, de la joie des retrouvailles avec ta famille, tes amis, ton village, avec ton chien et avec l'arbre de ton jardin. Et les écailles qui recouvraient tes yeux et ton cœur tombent et tu découvres des inconnus que tu réapprends à appréhender autrement.

Oui, oser l'inconnu, oser un poste difficile, c'est aussi t'exposer volontairement au danger de remettre en question toutes tes propres certitudes.

Mais si tu franchis ce pas, tu t'offres la possibilité de te donner une nouvelle vie. Je crois que c'est Confucius qui disait qu'on n'a que deux vies: la seconde commence le jour où l'on s'aperçoit qu'on en a qu'une…

Jean-Pierre MOLLE,
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GHANA

Cape Coast Castle

My linen blouse clung to my back, and I could hardly breathe. Outside, in the bright sunshine, although the temperature was above 30 degrees, a brisk breeze blew in from the ocean. But here, in the dank, dark dungeon, there was hardly any air, and it must have been over 40.

I was sweltering in one of the three dungeons of Cape Coast Castle, squinting in the dark to see the desperate scratch marks left by slaves two hundred years ago.

Cape Coast Castle, a three-hour drive west of the Ghanaian capital, Accra, is a World Heritage Site. It was one of the largest slave-holding sites in the colonial era. It now hosts a museum. The display showing the origins of the slave trade and its progression through a hundred and fifty years is excellent, but it's when you actually tour the whole castle that you begin to get a feel for what it must have been like. You go from deep in the dark, steaming hot dungeons where slaves were shackled and packed in their hundreds, with no toilet facilities and no ventilation, to the church at ground level where Anglicans went happily to pray on Sundays in full knowledge of what was happening below ground, to the Governor General's breezy residence on the top floor, with its idyllic view.

Actually, it is not true that you can get an inkling of what it must have been like. It's unimaginable. The slaves were torn from their families, walked shackled for hundreds of miles, not knowing where they were going, and then 'stored' in dungeons. They were from all over the African interior, and didn't know each other's languages. The few who survived were sold, then kept in the 'condemned cell', and once the boats were ready, they went through the 'door of no return' into the bright light, and on to small boats in the wild surf, which took them to bigger boats, where they started their journey into the unknown. Conditions on the boats were worse than in the dungeons.

At the castle, women slaves who refused to perform sexual favours for the slave masters went into a 'punishment room' where they were beaten, and kept in an even worse state than their fellow women prisoners. About eleven million men and women – people with loved ones, with mothers and fathers, with children, with hearts and emotions – were sold in the slave trade. It is estimated that about half of them – the lucky ones – died before reaching their destinations.

I remember meeting, and working with, descendants of the slave trade when I lived in Uruguay. What struck me the most about them was how it still hurt. They did not know where they came from. They had to reinvent a culture for themselves

And they were poor and marginalised, so probably would never get a chance to come back to their continent to search for their roots.

President Obama visited Cape Coast Castle with his family in 2009. Try to get hold of his short, but moving speech.

I constantly hear people trying to justify the slave trade, or at least shift a bit of the blame elsewhere, or muddy the waters. Europeans and North Americans will say: 'Slavery was a way of life at the time: everyone took part in it. The Africans had been trading slaves since time immemorial. The slaves were bought from Africans.' And Africans will say: 'But our form of slavery was different; it was much less brutal, it's true, slavery was always there. It is still there, on a different scale than in the seventeenth century. But whether it is boatloads of people being enslaved, or one, it is profoundly wrong. We tend to forget.

And that's why it's important to visit places like Cape Coast Castle. A sobering place indeed.

Paola Fornari-Hanna
Writer/Blogger/ Diplomatic Spouse

BULGARIA

Life in Delegation

We arrived in Sofia, Bulgaria on a hot morning in early August 2005. I was then heavily pregnant with our second child and a little bit unsure about the prospect of spending the next four years in my native Greece's neighbouring country. The outsider image I had of Bulgaria at the time was a mix, formed from my grandparents' early 1980s impressions of a spot-clean, polished, lush police state, and from the subsequent news stories in the '90s of decadence, corruption, mafia violence, rubbish mismanagement and immigration.

They say first impressions last. And certainly mine summed up pretty much our years in Bulgaria. First sights - a modern airport where we were greeted by the warm, friendly and smiley driver from the embassy, whom we quickly learned was also a onetime professional violinist and still an excellent amateur tennis player. Then, on the drive into town, a jumble of impressions. Within a mile of the airport a mess of derelict gypsy settlements and derelict apartment blocks, heaps of rubbish, green alleyways and broken asphalt; but still my senses were heightened by the vast open skies, balmy sunset, old and noisy cars, new fast Porches, the smell of petrol on the road; little grocery shops tucked into the blocks, homey restaurants, and at every corner magnificent neoclassical buildings that had seen better days but remained impressive. Then arriving at a modern hotel, with a swimming pool and spa charging the cheapest prices I had ever seen.

On our first evening out my husband Eddie and I shared some 'mezes' of typical Bulgarian food at the courtyard of an understated, cosy restaurant in the green centre of town. In early August the city is quiet and the clients in restaurants are few, as the population migrates to beach resorts or mountain village where the extended family homes are. Our waiter, also the owner of the restaurant, was kindly answering all our questions about the city.

I still have a picture of that night where both Eddie and I are beaming. Cold rakia for him, 'tarator' yoghurt soup for me, cheese banitsa, shopska salata, baked peppers and ljutenitsa dip spread on the red, embroidered tablecloth.

In the balmy night of Sofia we thought that we had reached a secret paradise tucked away from the rest of the busy world with the help of the Rila mountains in the South and the Danube river in the North.

Then our inaugurate dinner in Sofia was interrupted by what we thought was firework sounds.

We had been told that Bulgarians celebrate everything from kids' parties to election wins by throwing impressive firework displays. When we turned to see the marvellous spectacle, the only display we could locate was a sort of lighting in the evening sky.

Our lovely waiter who had been such a precious source of information that night had disappeared, only to come out ten minutes later looking pale, serious and tight-lipped. He brought with him our –very cheap - bill and told us hurriedly it was time to go. Next day Eddie called me from work to tell me that a Mafia execution had taken place at the little square just beside our restaurant. That was the fireworks mystery solved.

It was a blip, a false impression, however. In fact, Bulgaria turned out to be the best posting we have had so far. We learned a decent smattering of the melodic Bulgarian language, and had the great satisfaction of mastering a new alphabet, Cyrillic. We made friends for life, local and expats, we visited beautiful mountain ranges, old villages and riverside towns. We saw wonderful classical concerts in beautiful opera buildings and sang along to Bulgarian traditional music at 'mehanas' (traditional-style restaurants). We tasted their exquisite red wine, and participated in Orthodox mass in their striking historic churches, including the Alexander Nevsky cathedral and the astonishing Rila monastery. We skied and hiked in their imposing mountains and danced in the squares along with the parades of 'kukeri' (people dressed up as folk characters) during carnival. We marvelled at how the charming Bulgarians with modest means created the most hospitable evenings. And their paintings and crafts are still hanging on our walls everywhere we go!.

Alexandra Branningan,
Writer/ Irish Diplomatic Spouse.

Security in Delegations

Security Awareness at Post (Part 2)

....continued from the last Newsflash...

TRAVELLING IN TOWN

In the country of your posting or during a mission to a third country, you may need to make use of public transport or just walk shorter distances.
You are likely to be easily identified as a foreigner which may increase your exposure to petty crime. In higher risk areas, avoid walking at night.
To reduce potential risks you should:

When walking
* Do not display valuables, jewellery or expensive watches and keep mobile phones and wallets out of sight.
* Stay on busy streets and avoid dimly lit, quiet areas.
* If a street is deserted, walk in the middle of the pavement.
* Walk confidently, heads up, looking ahead as if you know where you are going, even if you don't.
* Be aware of your surroundings.
* Be very careful about wearing headphones as this reduces awareness of what is happening around you.
* If you have to consult a map, try to do this in a shop or restaurant.
Avoid looking like a tourist.
* Walk facing oncoming traffic so that no car can creep up behind you unseen.

In taxis
* Avoid casual, non-registered taxis and use only registered and reputable taxi operators, a list of which should exist at the Delegation. Ask for this list to the Head of Administration or RSO.
* Make sure your luggage is on board before settling into the taxi
* Ensure the taxi has the driver's photo and licence clearly displayed
* Make sure to have the sole use of the taxi (the driver may try to pick up other passengers)
* Ensure passenger doors are locked to prevent others getting in if the taxi stops
* Always keep handbags /laptop bag on the floor and not on the seat beside you
* Check you have all your belongings before paying the taxi and letting it go.

In public transport
* Be careful about using public transport that is not commonly used by expatriates
* Wait for your bus or train in a designated waiting area
* Know the schedules of the bus or trains and try to avoid waiting on deserted platforms
* Avoid taking the last bus or train
* If possible, sit in the bus or train car close to the driver
* Do not stay in compartments of subway/trains which are deserted
* After getting off the bus or leaving a subway station, always look around to see whether you are being followed.

When returning home
* Have your keys ready in your hand to avoid having to search them outside of your home
* If you suspect an intruder, do not go in – seek help.
* If someone has given you a lift home, ask them to wait until you are safely inside.

HOTEL SECURITY

Delegation staff is often required to stay in a hotel either when on mission or at the beginning or end of a posting. An important element for a safe stay in a hotel is fire safety.
To make your stay in a hotel safe and secure the following is recommended:
* At the reception, try to avoid other people hearing your name and room number.
* If there is a risk of incidents in front of the hotel, ask for a back room.
* Consider asking for a room not higher than the seventh floor, if you have doubts whether the fire service is sufficiently equipped. They may not be able to reach you on a higher floor.
* Always lock the door of your room with the bolt or safety chain. In the absence of a safety chain, put a wedge under the door (wood, plastic or even paper).
* Call reception to check the phone works
* Orientate where you are in relation to the lobby.
* Read the fire evacuation plan, walk the fire exit route and count the number of doors between your room and the emergency exit. If the corridor is filled with smoke, you will not be able to see them.
* Don't open the door to unexpected visitors. In case of doubt, check identity with the reception before opening.
* If going out, check that the room windows are secured. Consider using the "do not disturb sign" to give the impression that the room is occupied.
* Don't leave your room key number visible while having a meal.
* Don't use your credit card for room safes that are operated by swiping.
* Keep the room keys, a mobile phone, a small torch and your shoes close to your bed.

Be aware of drink spiking

When you are at a restaurant, a bar or a party, be aware that drink spiking can be a risk. To spike a drink means to put drugs into someone's drink without their knowledge or permission and with the intention of causing harm to the drinker. It can be a pill, powder or a liquid and it is usually tasteless, colourless and odourless. Most of the time, the objective is to relieve the victim of money or credit cards, but it can be also associated with rape or it could be used in order to compromise and then blackmail you.

Security in Delegations

Security Awareness at Post (Part 2)

** Never accept food or drink from someone you don't know*
** Never leave your drink unattended*
** If you leave your table for any reason, ask a friend to watch over the drinks*
** If your drink has been moved, has an unusual tint or a strange taste, don't drink it!*
** Don't share or swap drinks.*

PHONE SECURITY

In any telephone conversation, don't give out personal details unless you are absolutely sure of the person you are speaking to. Also, avoid answering any personal questions about yourself unless you are well acquainted.
Don't leave your name on your answering message. The caller should know who you are and will leave his details for you to return the call. Also, never give the impression you are away from your home for a long time, just that you are unavailable at the moment is a far safer option.
Don't rely exclusively on mobile phones. They can and do fail for many reasons. Always keep a list of the emergency numbers on paper.
Always check the phone signal strengths when going into unknown areas.

Abusive phone calls

Not every phone call you receive is always a friendly phone call. Anonymous calls can be unsettling. They are usually intended to lower your morale. If you ever encounter an abusive, nuisance or malicious call, don't just hang up, follow the steps described below:
1. **Don't respond**–Any type of strong reaction is what the caller is after. Instead, leave the phone unattended for a while, then simply hang up.
2. **Keep records–**If the calls persist, make a record of when they occur to see if there is a pattern. It will also be useful when reporting the offense to authorities. Try the return call function on your telephone to trace the abusive calls.
3. **Inform the security staff of your delegation.** They will help you contacting the telephone company and, if necessary, the police. Telephone companies usually have a policy for dealing with abusive calls and may be able to identify the number and bar it. If the calls are persistently abusive, you should notify the police.

MAIL SAFE

Threatening letters

If you receive any threatening or insulting letters, don't handle or touch them more than necessary. Put them in a clear plastic bag and pass them immediately to the delegation security staff.

Suspicious packages or letters

Package and letter **bombs** can often be recognised as suspicious from the outside. Here are a number of indicators to look for:
* Restrictive markings such as Confidential, Personal, to be opened only by..., Rush, Special delivery or Do not delay delivery
* Poorly-typed address, inaccuracies in address or titles or titles without names
* Misspelling of common words
* Excessive weight or thickness for the size of the envelope or package
* The feel of springiness, metallic components or stiffeners inside
* Small holes, protruding wires, string or metal foil
* Unusual odours (Many explosives used in letter bombs smell like shoe polish or almonds.)
* Oily or greasy stains on packaging
* Rigid or lopsided letter or package
* Excessive weight or unusual balance of weight
* Excessive securing material such as masking tape or string
* Excessive postage
* Unusual or unexpected point of origin, indecipherable or no return address
A suspicious package or letter should not be touched and moved. Report it to the security staff of the delegation immediately and keep people away from it. Any movement, especially cutting tape, strings, or other wrappings on a suspect package could cause an explosive device to detonate. Putting a suspect letter or package in water could also cause it to explode.
If a package or letter appears to contain **powder**:
* Treat it as suspect
* If possible, place it in a sealed plastic bag
* Do not further handle or move it
* Wash your hands and keep people away from it
* Inform the security staff of the delegation and/or local security services
If a package or letter has been opened and powder spills out:
* Do not attempt to clean it up.
* Cover the spilled contents immediately with anything (clothing, paper, trash can, etc.) and do not remove this cover!
* Leave the room and close the door and prevent others from entering.
* Wash your hands with soap and water to prevent spreading any powder to your face.
* Inform the security staff of the delegation and/or local security services.
* Remove heavily contaminated clothing as soon as possible and place in a plastic bag, or some other container that can be sealed.
* Shower with soap and water as soon as possible. Do not use disinfectant on your skin.

If possible, list all people who were in the room or area, especially those who had actual contact with the powder.

Security in Delegations

Security Awareness at Post (Part 2)

Give this list to both the local public health authorities so that proper medical follow-up can be ensured, and to local security services for further investigation.

INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA…

Advantages and risks

Social media are a global phenomenon enabling hundreds of millions of people around the world to exchange personal content and to share experiences, information or photos. They are also a great place to stay in touch with family and friends, in particular if far away from home like expatriate staff in delegations.

They can also help to keep you safe. Several Member States' consular services and/or local embassies provide up-to-the-minute travel advice via social media and following theses sides is generally recommended.

Despite many obvious advantages, social media carry also risks which follow from the nature of social networking and the massive base of users who are completely unknown to you.

When using internet and social media consider that

*No matter how real online interactions seem, they are not like being together with friends or having a private talk face to face,

*You may be revealing personal information to a much wider audience than you realise,

*Once you have published information on the internet, it is in the public domain– effectively forever, and may affect you, your family or your career even much later and in a way you never thought of.

*There may be users with malicious intentions who misuse information to compromise you, steal your electronic identity or even jeopardise your personal safety.

Preventive measures

You can avoid risks and enjoy social networking safely by a number of precautions:

* defend your computer against internet threats
* learn how to use a site properly
* check the privacy settings and set the levels at the highest
* chose a username that does not contain directly or indirectly any personal information
* Passwords: Make them strong, keep them to yourself and change them from time to time
* think twice about who you accept as friend
* keep your profile closed and allow only friends to view it.
* be cautious of publishing any information that allows to identify or locate you such as phone numbers, addresses, photos of your home or workplace, the date of your birthday, etc.
* keep your pictures private to only friends in your profile
* block people you don't know.
* don't say or publish anything that may later cause embarrassment to you or someone else.
* don't post comments that may cause offence to other people or groups of people.
* Report any negative incident or misuse (hacking, copying or adding of information without your knowledge, publishing of personal details without your permission) to the site administrator. Many big social network providers have reporting mechanisms and contact details on their website

CHILD SAFETY

General advice

* Give children basic security awareness appropriate for their age.
* Explain appropriate security behaviour and rehearse situations with your family.
* Keep a list of emergency numbers near the phone and in other relevant places (schoolbag for example).
* Check that there is a safe school transport system for your children.
* Ask school authorities to contact you before allowing your child to leave school premises early or with anybody you have not previously nominated.
* Employ only mature and responsible babysitters that you trust completely. Ensure that they are familiar with the rules about opening doors to callers, answering the phone etc.
* Before deciding to hire domestic staff it may be appropriate to introduce them to your children.

Teach children

*never to go with strangers and to refuse any gifts or approaches from strangers

*never to give any information to a stranger

*never to give personal information to others such as absences of family members, travel plans etc.

*lock the doors while at home and never to let strangers in

*the home address and phone number

*your office phone number

*how to use telephones including local public phone

*when and how to alert the police, who are the neighbours or the delegation, as soon as they are old enough

*if possible, key phrases in the local language(s)

*to report anyone who tries to harm or assault them

*to tell you always where they are going and what their plans are

*to travel in groups, or at least in pairs, and to be aware of areas to avoid.

EEAS - INFO

NEWS ITEMS

WE ARE GETTING THERE!!!!!! 'Little acorns make mighty trees'

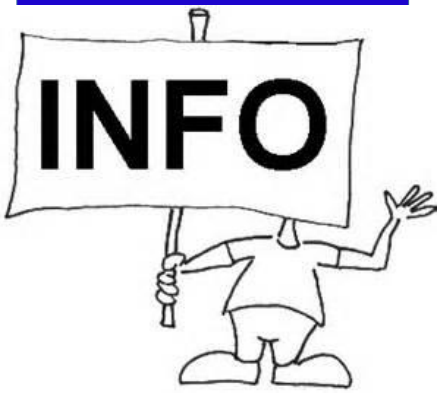
ROTATION 2015 FOR NON-MANAGEMENT POSTS:

In terms of gender balance, the figures show a good success rate for female candidates for the AD posts: out of an initial imbalance of only 35 % of female applicants for these posts, 40 % of the posts have been proposed to women.
On a more personal side, the EEAS administration, together with the Commission, has been able to organise 6 cases of double postings or family reunification in the framework of this Rotation.

HUMAN RESOURCES
Staff Opinion Survey – Summary Results

Top and bottom rated statements overall:

Willing to give extra effort when required	97%	Satisfying relationship between performance at work and career progression	32%
EU Delegations are important components of EEAS	96%	Mobility beneficial for career	32%
Proud to work for the EU	93%	Senior management provides useful feedback	33%
Have good working relationships with colleagues	92%	Senior management will follow up on the survey results	34%
Interested in own work	90%	Rotation beneficial for career	34%
Have clear understanding of expectations at work	83%	Line manager dealing effectively with poor performance	34%
Skills match current job	81%	EEAS structure conducive to delivering its objectives	34%



We are pleased to announce that the IT division has organised **14** "**Video conference/audio conference/mini pc/Laptops** " trainings.

The purpose of the concerned training is to show you how to use these different IT tools and how to avoid any problems you might have already encountered during a video conference, a meeting, an audio conference or a presentation.

17-Mar	14.00 - 15.30	SCHUMAN 4/A495
18-Mar	14.00 - 15.30	COR 04/A522
20-Mar	14.00 - 15.30	COR 04/A522
24-Mar	14.00 - 15.30	COR 04/A522
25-Mar	14.00 - 15.30	COR 04/A522
27-Mar	14.00 - 15.30	COR 04/A522

14-Apr	14.00 - 15.30	SCHUMAN 4/A495
15-Apr	14.00 - 15.30	COR 04/A522
17-Apr	14.00 - 15.30	COR 04/A522
21-Apr	14.00 - 15.30	COR 04/A522
22-Apr	14.00 - 15.30	COR 04/A522
24-Apr	14.00 - 15.30	COR 04/A522

Good to Know

Consommation et obsolescence programmée

11 astuces des fabricants pour vous faire payer encore plus.

L'obsolescence programmée consiste à planifier délibérément et volontairement la durée de vie d'un produit. Bien entendu, aucun fabricant ne vend de biens s'autodétruisant à une date précise. Néanmoins, les astuces pour pousser les consommateurs à remplacer le plus vite possible ordinateurs, machines à laver ou encore vêtements sont légion. Découvrez les pratiques plus ou moins avouables des fabricants :

1 – L'appareil irréparable !!!
Rendre un appareil irréparable est un classique de l'obsolescence programmée. **L'exemple le plus connu de cette astuce est celui de l'iPod (première, deuxième et troisième génération), dont la batterie n'était pas amovible.** Au bout de 18 mois environ, lorsqu'elle était usée, le baladeur était bon à jeter. Apple a évité de justesse le procès en dédommageant ses clients. Et que dire du radio réveil Phillips simulateur d'aube, dont il est expliqué sur le mode d'emploi que l'ampoule n'est pas remplaçable. « Quand l'ampoule est morte, le réveil à 190 euros doit être jeté », s'énerve un utilisateur sur le forum du site Que choisir.
> Solution : se tourner vers les sites spécialisés comme iFixit (américain) ou CommentReparer.com, qui donnent des astuces pour réparer soi-même son matériel.

2 – L'incompatibilité
Vous avez acheté une nouvelle console ? Il va falloir renouveler tout votre stock de jeux. Votre ordinateur vous demande de mettre à jour votre anti-virus ? Vous souhaitez installer la dernière version d'iTunes ? Pas de chance : votre appareil est déjà trop vieux et incapable de supporter les nouvelles versions de ces logiciels. **« Windows 7 nécessite 15 fois plus de puissance processeur que Windows 98, 85 fois plus de mémoire vive et 68 fois plus d'espace disque »**, déplore Frédéric Bordage, sur son site GreenIT.fr. Du coup, même si votre ordinateur fonctionne encore, ses performances seront très limitées. Impossible également de brancher le dernier iPod 5 sur la même prise que les précédents modèles. Il faut alors remplacer tous les accessoires.

3 -Les pièces détachées manquantes ou hors de prix
Si votre robot mixeur date de plus de cinq ans, il y a fort à parier que vous aurez du mal à trouver des lames pour remplacer celles usagées. Et quand bien même elles seraient encore disponibles chez un revendeur, leur remplacement ne serait sans doute pas rentable.

. **Pourquoi payer 25 euros pour remplacer une lampe de four micro-ondes lorsqu'on peut acheter un four neuf à moins de 30 euros ?**
> Certaines pratiques font gonfler la facture inutilement. Lors d'une panne de la carte d'alimentation sur un écran plat, les réparateurs vont vous proposer de changer la carte entière (600 euros) alors que le remplacement d'un composant coûte… 30 centimes, comme l'a révélé une enquête d'Envoyé spécial de 2010. Une proposition de loi du sénateur écologiste Jean-Vincent Placé propose un accès aux pièces détachées pendant une durée minimale de 10 ans.

4 – L'obsolescence fonctionnelle
Une nouvelle touche « lavage intelligent » sur le lave-vaisselle, un micro-ondes qui calcule lui-même le temps de cuisson, une télévision haute définition ou un ordinateur avec un processeur deux fois plus puissant : « l'obsolescence fonctionnelle » correspond au fait qu'un produit ne réponde plus aux nouveaux usages attendus, selon la définition de l'Ademe. Dans des secteurs où l'évolution technologique est de plus en plus rapide, l'innovation crée le besoin. **Depuis 2010, Apple a sorti pas moins de 18 modèles différents de son iPad** ! Selon Christian Lafferère, directeur du site Love2recycle.fr (une entreprise qui recycle les téléphones), les Français changent de téléphone tous les 18 mois en moyenne. Le plus souvent, il s'agit pourtant d'innovations cosmétiques, pointe du doigt l'association de consommateur Que Choisir.

5 – Les réparateurs incompétents
« Un réparateur dispose en moyenne de 15 à 20 minutes pour une intervention », se désole Linda Bendali, journaliste pour Envoyé spécial et auteur d'un reportage sur le sujet diffusé en 2010. Manque de temps, mais aussi de compétence : **une panne sur un lave-linge provoquée volontairement par un simple fil débranché n'a pas pu être diagnostiquée dans trois cas sur quatre**, comme l'a montré le reportage d'Envoyé spécial. « Les techniciens sont de moins en moins formés aux gestes techniques », déplore Linda Bendali.
> A la décharge des réparateurs, il faut avouer que les appareils sont de plus en plus sophistiqués. « La majorité des produits sont fabriqués en Chine [...], les données techniques sont plus complexes à récupérer », rapporte un responsable du service après-vente de Carrefour à l'association Les Amis de la Terre. Résultat : seuls 44 % des appareils qui tombent en panne sont réparés, selon l'Ademe. C'est même moins de 20% pour les appareils hors garantie.

Good to Know

Consommation et obsolescence programmée

6 – La mode jetable
Oublié, l'unique catalogue de La Redoute qui faisait date dans la saison. La « fast fashion » sévit partout, comme l'a dénoncé la journaliste britannique Lucy Siegle dans un livre publié en 2011. **Chaque femme achète en moyenne près de 30 kilos de vêtements chaque année et 30% de ces habits ne sont même jamais portés.** Une véritable stratégie de la part des marques, qui profitent d'une main d'œuvre à bas coût pour inonder le marché. Zara produit par exemple plus de 12 000 vêtements différents chaque année, selon la journaliste.
> Symbole de cette mode jetable, l'enseigne irlandaise Primark qui a ouvert fin 2013 en France son premier magasin. De la mode ultra discount, avec une robe moulante à 15 euros à porter juste le temps d'une soirée… quitte à la mettre ensuite à la poubelle.

7 – La fabrication bas de gamme
La spectaculaire chute des prix des appareils ménagers (-23% depuis 1998 selon l'Insee) cache une autre réalité : celle de la fabrication low cost. Dans les téléviseurs à écran plat par exemple, le condensateur, un élément sensible à la chaleur, est le plus souvent placé à côté des dissipateurs sur la carte d'alimentation. Comme l'a montré un épisode de « Cash Investigation » diffusée sur France 3, cela réduit drastiquement la durée de vie du condensateur et donc de l'appareil.
> Autre exemple : **huit lave-linges sur dix sont désormais équipés de cuves en plastique plutôt qu'en inox, qui peuvent se casser facilement**. Selon des experts interrogés dans une émission d'Envoyé spécial, les machines à laver seraient conçues pour résister à 2 500 cycles de lavages maximum et les téléviseurs pour 20 000 heures d'utilisation.

8 – La date de péremption avancée
La DLC (date limite de consommation) indiquée sur les produits alimentaires est-elle à respecter au pied de la lettre ? Pas si l'on en croit les associations de consommateurs. Charles Pernin, chargé de mission alimentation et santé à l'association CLCV, affirme ainsi que l'**on nous vend des produits à dates raccourcies juste « pour assurer un certain niveau de rotation dans les rayons**« . La preuve : jusqu'en 2013, certains produits frais à destination des départements d'outre-mer bénéficiaient d'une DLC allongée de 20 jours pour les yaourts ou même 80 jours pour du gruyère râpé.
> En réalité, il est parfaitement possible de déguster un yaourt plus d'une semaine après la date limite, et ce sans danger (à condition de bien les conserver). En moyenne, les Français jettent chaque année 20 kilos de déchets alimentaires, dont 7 kilos de produits non consommés encore emballés, selon une étude de l'Ademe.

9 – L'usure artificielle
Les fabricants d'imprimantes limitent-ils délibérément la durée d'utilisation de leurs appareils? Si l'on en croit le documentaire « Prêt à jeter », diffusé en 2010 sur Arte, une puce insérée dans imprimante bloquerait le nombre de copies à 18 000 pages ou 5 ans d'utilisation. Le fabricant mis en cause dans ce documentaire dément vigoureusement toute pratique de ce genre et l'association Que Choisir avoue ne jamais avoir observé de tels faits.
> Nul besoin d'une longue enquête, en revanche, pour s'apercevoir que **le message vous prévenant que la cartouche d'encre est à changer intervient largement avant qu'elle soit réellement vide**. Même les fabricants comme HP reconnaissent que les avertissements de niveaux d'encre fournissent des estimations « à des fins de planification uniquement ».

10 – L'inflation de nouvelles normes
Avec 400 000 normes officiellement recensées, la France est aujourd'hui le pays le plus réglementé du monde, rapporte Philippe Eliakim, dans son livre « Absurdité à la française ». Dans un reportage de « Pièces à conviction » diffusé sur France 3 en octobre 2013, on voit par exemple que **les normes régissant la taille des potelets (qui délimitent l'espace sur la voie publique) ont subi deux changements en cinq ans,** forçant les maires à réinvestir dans de nouveaux potelets. Autre exemple : la taille règlementaire des vestiaires des arbitres de football, fixée par la Fédération française, qui augmente en fonction des classements sportifs. Pour peu que l'équipe gagne une division, et il faut changer les installations.
> Selon un rapport parlementaire de 2013, les seules mises aux normes imposées entre 2009 et 2011 ont coûté 2,3 milliards d'euros aux collectivités en 2011.

11 – L'argument écologique
L'argumentaire écologique consiste à inciter les consommateurs à se débarrasser de leur ancien équipement sous prétexte d'en acquérir de nouveaux plus respectueux de l'environnement. L'exemple le plus frappant est celui de la « prime à la casse » automobile. Entre 1994 et 2010, trois primes d'incitation à l'achat ont gonflé artificiellement les ventes de voitures neuves. Un procédé, qui, en plus d'être discutable sur le plan écologique, est très couteux pour les finances publiques.
> Le même argument est utilisé par le Gifam, qui regroupe les fabricants d'appareils ménagers

Good to Know

Consommation et obsolescence programmée

« Le renouvellement des 25 millions d'appareils électroménagers de plus de 10 ans par des appareils récents performants permettrait d'économiser 5,7 milliards de kWh ». Un chiffre qui ne prend pas en compte l'impact environnemental de la fabrication des nouveaux appareils.
> Il est impossible de parler d'obsolescence programmée délibérée de la part des fabricants. C'est du moins la position des associations de consommateurs. Selon Que Choisir, l'âge moyen d'un appareil électroménager est même passé de six ans en 2008 à sept ans et quatre mois en 2013. Et les taux de fiabilité frôlent les 90% dans la plupart de cas. De plus, pourquoi les industriels auraient-ils besoin de dégrader intentionnellement la solidité de leurs produits ? Dans 40 à 50% des cas, les appareils sont remplacés alors qu'ils sont encore en état de fonctionner, d'après un sondage TNS *Sofres/Gifam* de 2011.

Durée d'usage estimée des appareils ménagers	
Appareil	Durée d'usage estimée
Source : Ademe, Que Choisir	
Télévision	7 ans
Imprimante	3 à 5 ans
Ordinateur portable	3 à 12 ans
Téléphone mobile	20 mois à 6 ans
Ampoule à incandescence	1 000 heures
Ampoule fluo-compacte	6 000 à 15 000 heures
Tube neon	4 000 à 70 000 heures
Aspirateur	6 ans
Lave-linge	15 ans
Four encastrable	6 à 7 ans
Four micro-ondes	6 à 7 ans
Cuisinière	7 à 8 ans
Tables de cuisson	6 à 7 ans
Congélateur et réfrigérateur	6 à 7 ans
Trouvé sur : **Actuwiki.fr**	

CALENDAR

EUFN Members' Corner (Activities – Culture)

SPEAK ENGLISH

En quelques mots : Venez converser en anglais C'est l'occasion de vous initier ou de pratiquer votre anglais, 1 ou 2 fois par semaine si vous le souhaitez. Le professeur peut corriger et expliquer vos fautes et surtout vous rappeler les règles de grammaire! Compétence assurée à l'américaine!

***Participation :* 6 euros/pers**

***Quand :* tous les vendredis de 13h30 à 15h30.**

SPEAK ITALIAN

En quelques mots : Tous les lundis, venez converser en groupe dans une ambiance conviviale et autour d'un café.

***Participation :* 3 €/ pers 8 pers maxi**

***Quand :* tous les lundis de10h30-12h**

And soon SPEAK DUTCH…

COOKING CLASSES/ Cuisines du monde

ITALIAN COOKING CLASS: LASAGNE

Si vous voulez apprendre à cuisiner des LASAGNES comme une italienne et réalisez un gâteau dont tout le monde se souviendra, le tout arrosé d'un bon vin italien, alors rejoignez-nous et venez cuisiner puis déguster!

quand : mardi 24 Mars à 19h30

où: avenue Winston Churchill, 247 - Uccle

participation: 25€ (par virement - Grazia Carrozzo BE07643004693766 - Nom Prenom Atelier 24.03.2015)

inscription: dans commentaires

nombres de places limitées: 8

VISITES CULTURELLES/ CULTURAL EVENTS

La maison d'Erasme et le musée du Béguinage - jeudi 19 mars de 10h à 12h

Visitez le Musée de la Maison d'Érasme et le Béguinage d'Anderlecht. Suivez les pas de ce grand Humaniste dans la riche bibliothèque et les jardins. La Maison d'Erasme, un musée dédié au séjour d'Érasme à Anderlecht. •Le Vieux Béguinage et son musée, le plus petit béguinage de Belgique. •Les Jardins: un jardin de plantes médicinales et un jardin philosophique. Cette belle demeure de la fin du 15e siècle a accueilli Erasme pendant cinq mois au cours de l'année 1521. Consacré à l'esprit de la Renaissance dans les anciens Pays-Bas, le musée qui s'y est installé plonge le visiteur dans l'atmosphère contemporaine d'Erasme et de ses recherches humanistes.

Et encore,

- jeudi 26 mars 10h A Forest, l'Art Déco s'impose,
- jeudi 30 avril 10h Le charme feutré d'un quartier bobo... Berkendael
- jeudi 14 mai 10h Uccle, un petit coin de paradis
- jeudi 25 juin 10h Saint-Gilles, c'est chou !

Et l'exposition tant attendue :

- mardi 12 mai à 10H15 La rétrospective CHAGALL

Tips to prevent hacking

Fraudulent emails

Tips to reduce the risk of hacking and fraud, when using online communications
Once a fraudster has obtained your personal information, they will know which businesses you have dealings with and will then often use spoof emails to imitate a company, sending forged letters, invoices or new bank details and request more personal data or even money.
Whilst it is not possible to prevent fraudsters imitating businesses, we urge you to be extra vigilant when answering emails and giving out personal information and have provided some tips below on how to keep your data safe and reduce the risk and impact of fraud.
For further guidance on information security, you can also visit www.getsafeonline.org or www.actionfraud.police.uk

When receiving email correspondence, always look out for:

- A change to the email address of the sender, often just by one character
- Emails or letters with poor spelling, punctuation and grammar
- The company logo appears different or of a poor quality
- The format of the email or letter differs to correspondence previously received
- The nature of the email is unexpected, for example, an urgent request for money
- You are suddenly asked to send a payment to a different bank account

You can also reduce the risk of hacking by:

- Never reply to a suspicious email, or divulge any personal information
- Install antivirus or antispyware software on your PC and other electronic devices, updating this regularly
- Ensure your firewall settings are set at the best protection level
- Change your email and social networking passwords regularly, using a password incorporating letters, special characters and numbers
- Always access sites through verified links or go to the company's official website using an internet browser
- Be cautious of emails purporting to be from social network sites asking you to click on a link or open an attachment - even if it seems to be from a known contact
- Do not disclose personal information in your social media profiles, making this easily accessible for fraudsters and restrict your privacy settings so only known contacts can view your information

If you become a victim of hacking or fraud:

- Always report any fraudulent activity to Action Fraud at www.actionfraud.police.uk
- Immediately notify businesses that you have regular dealings with, such as your Letting Agent, if you believe your personal data has been breached
- Change your passwords immediately for your email, online services and social media sites
- Update your firewall and virus protection on all devices
- Set up a block or filter for junk mail

BOOK:

THE METHOD – We shared the idea with friends. Each enthusiast - participant to be was asked to write a paragraph. These paragraphs were sequenced according to the participants' accession in the project.

It began as a game and it was for fun. We never intended to create a masterpiece or a contemporary classic.

We wanted to give maximum freedom to our writers: no scenario, no fixed characters, no happy end, no specific number of written characters. However, we had to give them a short deadline (you are not surprised, are you?).

Everyone found it easy to participate (except for the coordinating committee of course!) as only one paragraph was required. The process was highly unpredictable as nobody knew what would come next and how it would all end.

The story had to be written in the participants' mother tongue and then translated into English. We thought this would be the best way to celebrate the richness of our languages and our cultural diversity.

Indeed, with so many writers, the story would often take unexpected turns. What is more important, however, is that so many bridges were built in the process: not only did our little project connect people, it also opened a door to togetherness, creativity, dreams and love.

You can get a complimentary copy of that book emailing:

<Virginija.ZABOTKAITE@ec.europa.eu>

EUFN

Our Team

Membership

EUROPEAN UNION FAMILIES NETWORK

Dear Members,
We thank you for your continued support for our association. We would like to invite you to renew your 36 euros membership for 2015, which will allow you to vote for the new Board Members and to reflect your views on the activities of EUFN. Your generous contribution can be accepted at the following bank account:

EU Families Network EUFN a.s.b.l.

ING Bank Account: 310-1321897-67

BIC: BBRUBEBB

IBAN: BE93 3101 3218 9767

Reminder: Please, it is time to renew your membership for 2015 and to come forward as a volunteer to support our association. Thank you!

Editor: Florence Cunningham

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